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For Jos. Gales Esq

with the request of Mrs. E. B. Lee

The Age of Washington:

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CALOCAGATHIAN AND READING ROOM SOCIETIES,

OF

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,

BY

Z. COLLINS [✓]LEE, Esq.

AT THE

ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, JULY 17th, 1849.

BALTIMORE:

PRINTED BY JOHN MURPHY & CO.

No. 178 MARKET STREET.

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ST. MARY'S COLLEGE, September 17th, 1849.

SIR:

In compliance with the instructions of the Calocagathian and Reading Room Societies, the undersigned have the honor to tender you the grateful thanks of the Societies, for the able and eloquent Address with which you favored them at the late Commencement, and to request a copy of the same for publication. Hoping that you will accede to their wishes, they have the honor to remain

Your faithful and obedient servants,

J. F. McMULLIN,	}	<i>Committee of Calocagathian Society.</i>
C. O'DONOVAN,		
G. PRUDHOMME,		
A. DEJEAN,	}	<i>Committee of Reading Room Society.</i>
C. DESOBRY,		
E. PRUDHOMME,		

To Z. COLLINS LEE, Esq.

BALTIMORE, September 19th, 1849.

GENTLEMEN:

I have received your favor of the 17th, requesting, on behalf of the Societies you represent, a copy of the very hurried and brief Address I delivered at your late Collegiate Commencement, it is scarcely worthy the consideration you have given it, but as an evidence of my regard and best wishes for your Societies, and the invaluable Institution of learning under whose auspices you are fostered, I submit for your disposal a copy, as desired.

With much esteem,

I am, very respectfully, yours,

Z. COLLINS LEE.

Messrs.	J. F. McMULLIN,	}	<i>Committee of Calocagathian Society.</i>
	C. O'DONOVAN,		
	G. PRUDHOMME,		
	A. DEJEAN,	}	<i>Committee of Reading Room Society.</i>
	C. DESOBRY,		
	E. PRUDHOMME,		

A D D R E S S
BEFORE THE
CALOCAGATHIAN AND READING ROOM SOCIETIES
OF ST. MARY'S COLLEGE, BALTIMORE.

GENTLEMEN :

Your request, flattering as it is, should have been declined, and on this occasion I ought rather to be a silent but grateful participant in the ceremonies which will soon close to most of you, the classic associations of an Academic life.—Here, under the benign government of Christianity and letters, you have enjoyed many, I doubt not, very many days of unalloyed happiness, and in parting now from your Instructors, companions and friends, the wish will rise unbidden to the heart, that they and you may find in the unknown and untried future, friends as true, and scenes as delightful as those from which you are soon perhaps to separate forever.

I could not, therefore, better discharge the duty you have called me to, than to endeavor in a few brief remarks, to fix your eyes on the brightest and noblest lessons and examples of private and public virtue which are to be found in that period of our national history, which I shall term the “*Age of Washington.*”

And at no time could we more appropriately pause and contemplate the glorious men and measures of that truly heroic epoch : shadows, clouds and darkness are lowering over the world—the angry billows of discord and popular convulsion are breaking in fearful commotion around the ark of freedom and civilization, and the rights or the wrongs of mankind are to be maintained or vindicated only by preserving and diffusing the great principles with which the name of Washington is alone associated.

I might solicit you to follow me back to the ancient and classic memories of the past, or speculate with me on the startling portents of the future—but these are themes familiar to your studies. The luminous page of Livy, the burning eloquence of Cicero, and the philosophy of the schools of Athens, would afford now but feeble lights for the pathway of an American student, who is to take his position and act his part on the large and ever varying theatre of this wonderful era.

Onward—onward—is the watch-word of enterprize and ambition; and *upward* the aim of him who would be a leader, a reformer and a benefactor in this the 19th century.

From the birth to the death of George Washington is comprehended the most interesting record of modern times. This illustrious man, without advantages from birth, wealth or education, has left for the admiration of posterity, a character which is acknowledged by the world to place him foremost in the first class of greatness :

“ Princeps fundatorum imperiorum.”

He was not admirable for genius, eminent for learning, distinguished for eloquence, or remarkable for address.—Judgment, integrity, fortitude and benevolence, constituted and completed his character, exalting it to perfect magnanimity and the highest wisdom, a simple and sublime pre-eminence, that made men of genius, eloquence and address his inferiors and instruments—his objects were always noble, his means uniformly justifiable, and his measures the result of deep reflection, so that although his efforts occasionally were unsuccessful, they never failed to be glorious—he came into life just in time to establish the freedom of his country, and was withdrawn to a higher existence as soon as the growing strength of our institutions no longer required his support.—His career in this respect resembling the great river of the Alps, which, descending from snow-crowned summits, pours a full current through the plains of Italy, when they languish under summer suns—in a word, of this great Alfred of the Western World, it may be said with truth, that his destiny and principles so happily concurred, that he was not only the most meritorious, but the most useful and blameless patriot that ever lived.

By his side on the field, and in the counsels of our infant Republic, stood among its founders Alexander Hamilton, second to Washington alone, a position which reflects the brightest glory on them both.

With a zeal fed by continual ardor, he devoted to the varying exigencies of his country, a mind whose resources were greater than the greatest occasion—his invention was quick, his judgment strong, his understanding capacious, his penetration acute, and his memory faithful—he was prudent in counsel, daring in the field, eloquent in the Senate, cogent and persuasive as a writer, and indefatigable and expeditious in the administration of affairs, disinterested, liberal, firm and enthusiastic, in matters of personal feeling and private honor, his frankness and spirit were proverbial, and in his last act perhaps excessive—he was killed, as you know, in a duel, by Col. Burr, and he went to the ground, determined to receive but not to return his adversary's fire—thus offering up his own life to a sense of honor, and shielding his enemy's by a feeling of religion, declaring that as a military man, he could not refuse invitation of Col. Burr, while as a christian, he would not shed the blood of a fellow-creature in private combat.

Of a life, the term of which fell short of fifty years, he gave twenty to the public service, and left it poor in everything but a title to renown and honor—this, nor a cruel death, nor a neglected grave, nor the virulence of party, could take away.

And as a devoted patriot, an accomplished soldier, statesman, orator, scholar and gentleman, the memory of Hamilton will flourish so long as the admiration of mankind shall attend exalted genius, heroic virtues, generous affections and glorious deeds.

These, gentlemen, were the two central figures, the commanding spirits of the "Age of Washington," which, commencing on the 22d February, 1732, terminated with the close of his earthly career on the 13th December, 1799.

Within the space of these sixty-seven memorable years, what a great work was accomplished for mankind, and how noble and illustrious the actors, by whose hands it was performed?

History had recorded the vain struggles of ancient and modern nations to establish a representative government, where laws were enacted by the people for their own benefit—a fierce and licentious democracy had given neither order or freedom to the Greek or the Roman, but rather paved the way for the iron heel of a military despotism, or the hopeless and desolating war of factions.

Italy had witnessed later struggles for republican government, as bloody and as fruitless as those which preceded the sceptre of the Cæsars.—Venice and Genoa flourished while commerce, arts and letters occupied their citizens, but at no period of their proud and brilliant history did they enjoy the blessings which laws, based upon liberty, and liberty regulated by laws can alone bestow. Their maritime wealth and power, the lustre that was shed over them by victory, have faded away;—all but the divine genius which their poets, sculptors and painters have preserved, and these Tyres of modern glory, with Florence and Ferrara, are now remembered only because Tasso, Ariosto, Alfieri, Dante, Petrarch and Canova have linked them to immortal names.

Wherever you turn your eyes from the earliest events of the Christian era down to the birth of Washington, there can be found no example of a free regulated government like ours, where perfect equality and justice is secured to the governed.—The great problem of man's capacity for self-government, had, it is true, been tried, but without success.—England had proclaimed from the scaffold of Charles, a commonwealth, but Cromwell centred in his own person all the powers of king, lords and commons—it flourished for a time amid his armed puritan warriors, but perished the moment the Protector expired; and from 1688 to 1732, republicanism was but the dream of a few noble and gifted spirits. Sidney, and Hampden, and Locke, had fondly and vividly worshipped its image—a beau ideal of freedom over which they yearned with the love of patriots, and to the fidelity of their devotion they had pledged themselves, while the dungeon and the block had not shaken their intrepid assertion of English liberty. The trial by jury, and the habeas corpus had, it is true, after revolution and bloodshed, been established, but still the great problem of human freedom was not yet solved. That wonderful and glorious solution was reserved for America, and was promulgated first here by Washington and his compatriots. It was *practically, fully* established; founded in the capacity of the people to govern themselves, and recognizing the only sovereign power on earth to reside in, and emanate from, the popular will. Washington was the herald of glad tidings, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, preparing the way for a great civil millennium. The division of legislative, judicial and executive powers, so as to give each its true and proper scope, and at the same time to preserve the har-

mony and independent efficiency of all, was the difficulty which for ages had puzzled and baffled the wisest statesmen.

But our fathers, with Washington at their head, cut the Gordian knot, with the sword at first, through a conflict of unparalleled suffering and sacrifice, but of final triumph and glory, and severing the American Colonies from the English crown, renounced all allegiance to any power but that which was wielded by the people.

The crown they recognized conferred no sovereignty—it was the laurel wreath placed by a grateful nation on the patriot's brow. The sceptre which they bowed to was the voiceless ballot, by which an American citizen expressed his wishes or commands to the rulers of a free people.—Avoiding, on the one hand, a wild and unlicensed democracy, and on the other unnecessary restraints and abridgments of popular rights, the framers of our Constitution, as if divinely inspired, prepared at that convention, over which the Father of his country presided, a form of government, and a code so just, so simple in its terms, and so binding in the innate strength of its requirements and obligations, that it has become the wonder, as it is the admiration, of the civilized world. It secured a more perfect union than the Confederacy had made, and declared its great purpose to be to establish and preserve to the people of the States of that Union, the enjoyment of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Emerging from the darkening clouds of a seven years' revolutionary war, after privation and distress, alternate defeat and victory, with an impoverished treasury, and a beggared army, drawn together from thirteen feeble colonies, at a time of gloom and despondence, this noble Constitution of free government was presented by Washington and his associates, to their country and the world, complete in all the adjustments of power, and so obviously wise and necessary to regulated freedom, that it was accepted almost unanimously by the people and the States.

Its foundations had been laid deep in that *love* of liberty which distinguished the settlers of the American Colonies, and it rose a lofty and spotless column, high, *high*, above all other monuments of human government.

Should you not, gentlemen, then, task your utmost energies and instruct the rising generation to study it, to understand its spirit, to maintain its legitimate powers, and to cling to it as the *only* bond of our union and glory. It encountered, (as all things human must,) some opposition to its adoption, arising more from the

fears which former republican efforts in the Old World had caused, by their corruption and their downfall, but as the swords of Washington, Hamilton, Green, Knox, Howard and their fellow-patriots, had achieved the freedom it secured, so in debate and with the pen they maintained and enforced its successful adoption. Hamilton, whom I have placed second only to Washington, devoted the highest powers of the most gifted intellect, and of the largest statesmanship to the vindication of the Constitution, in a work which should be your guide whenever you are called to act—for the Federalist must be read by all who love their country, and would understand the principles of her great Magna Charter.

The works of English statesmen are justly admired—Bolingbroke, Burke and Jones, and the galaxy whose fame covers as with light the firmament of British literature, but I hazard nothing in saying, that the Constitution, with the writings of Hamilton, Jay and Marshall, in expounding its letter and spirit, are equalled by no other productions, in any language, upon civil polity, and can never be surpassed for the terseness, purity and power of the style and tone which distinguish them.

Alas, gentlemen, our fathers are no more! The sublime spirits of the “Age of Washington” are with us only in their glorious deeds—the battle field and the hand of time have snatched all, nearly all, from the sight of the present generation—a lingering star or two yet hang upon our horizon, shedding on us their mellow light;—soon they will set forever, unclouded to the last. Where are Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Marshall, Madison? Their forms can no more be seen, but they can never die.—The Father of his country sleeps amid the children of that land he liberated. Those of you that have visited the Hero’s tomb, have looked upon the spot where he reposed when the storm of battle was over, and refreshed his spirit, and elevated his thoughts by the culture and contemplation of his fields. Beside him was her, the chosen and beloved consort and companion of his life, like him in the gentler attributes and graces of her sex, fitted to be the sharer of his glory and repose—all still remains, but the Patriot sleeps on the banks of the Potomac, by the side of his fond associate and exalted partner—wild flowers and the evergreen are blooming over them in token of the renewal and immortality of the glorious dead, and when summer comes *there* birds sing sweetly, and like angels’ voices, tell of happiness, harmony and peace.

Go then, gentlemen, to that hallowed spot, and learn to be good and great.

“In triumph there, the patriot may feel
 Recalling days of blood and glory past,
 There let the youth of every nation kneel,
 And learn to be what, Washington, thou wast.”

I said Madison was no more ; alas, the mournful tribute of the living is now to be paid to her* his venerated and venerable consort, whose virtues, whose benevolence and grace, cast a lustre even over the “Age of Washington.”

The survivor of that noble group of heroic men and splendid women, she was a queen in all but its titles, whose crown and sceptre were charity and love—she lived to witness the country that her illustrious husband served, honoring his memory, and it will embalm her own.—Over her tomb will the warm tears of the poor and humble be shed, and amid the more imposing emblems of public sorrow, shall fall the widow’s sigh and the orphan’s grief, over their friend and benefactress.—Thus, thus, like shadows do they leave us! The partner of the great Hamilton yet lives, full of the intellect and memories of that great age.

Marshall, the friend of Madison, the biographer of Washington, of whom it was truly said, that when “the ermine of justice descended on his shoulders it touched nothing not as pure and spotless as itself,” will live forever with them in their works of patriotism. But upon you and the rising generation will devolve the preservation of these their works—this Constitution, and the Union which rests on it, and the blessings of religion and law which flourish under it.

The great effort of the men of the Age of Washington, was to found an empire where all who had the spirit to be free, or the virtue to be just, might come and find refuge and security. No lords, no aristocracy, no exclusive classes, but one title higher than all others alone could be bestowed, the *title* of a free American citizen.

The stars of heraldry and the cloth of gold, are here as they placed them, shining emblazoned and undimmed on the banner of the Union, and spread out under the heavens as the only sign by which an American should live, should conquer, or die.

* Mrs. Madison died the day before this address was delivered.

If party spirit, and the tendencies of a restless and progressive age, drive sometimes our national bark upon tempestuous billows, and clouds seem to overwhelm her, still while that flag is on high and flies above us, the Constitution will weather every storm in safety, while in the language of the immortal Washington, "we preserve an *indissoluble union* of the States under one Federal head, and a sacred regard to public justice, and cultivate the prevalence of friendly and pacific dispositions among the people of the United States, which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and policies, and to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity, there will be no danger. These (said that illustrious man) are the pillows on which the glories of our independency and national character must be supported. Liberty is the basis, and whoever would dare sap the foundation or overturn the structure, under whatever specious pretext he may attempt it, will merit the bitterest execration and the severest punishment which can be inflicted by his injured country."

How wise and how prophetic! The excesses of faction and the mad ambition of public men, have in our day occasioned anxiety and alarm; questions of temporary interest and of domestic concern are often magnified and enflamed by partizan demagogues, to carry a selfish purpose, or secure a party triumph, names of former renown are enlisted in the north and south, and the baleful voice of disunion is even heard muttering ill-omened and phrenzied threats against the Constitution and Union. But, gentlemen, be not dismayed, that Union is founded on a rock, against which the storm will spend its fury so long as you, and those that come after you, shall frown down and trample in the dust any and every public man from whose traitor lips the harsh word of *disunion* shall ever fall.

They may amend or change the Constitution by its own provisions and in the forms prescribed, but quench and put out its light and

I know not where is that Promethian heat
That can this light relume.

The Constitution and Union, should be your only watch-word, the north, the south, the east and the west, are all equally interested in the preservation of the Union, the offspring of common efforts, treasure and blood, it must be maintained now by a compromise of all interests, and the sacrifice of every sectional pre-

judice—with the Union and the Constitution, we can stand against the world in arms—without them

“None so poor as do us reverence.”

During the life of the great Washington, he witnessed the fruits, though immature and fleeting, of our revolutionary example and his own splendid virtues. In England, he beheld a ministry like Lord North’s driven out of power, and the liberal principles of the elder Pitt in the ascendancy, representation and taxation were more nearly equalized, and restrictions on popular rights taken off. But more fearful, more bloody were the changes in France, “our friend in peace, our ally in war,” scarcely had her gallant sons under La Fayette returned from their well fought fields in America, than burst forth in their own land the long suspended but terrific flame of civil revolution, terrific and sanguinary indeed it was, it passed over Europe like a wild tornado, sweeping away with all that was vicious, almost everything that was useful—the Red Republicans of France, carried on their work of ruin in a spirit of vengeance and not of reform, and in striking down one tyrant to the dust raised up a thousand despots in the persons of ferocious and sanguinary Jacobins, more dangerous to liberty than the sceptre and the crown.

Thus in the age of Washington was enacted the noblest and most patriotic drama in human affairs in America, and in France the most startling and terrible tragedy the world had ever seen.

The former vindicated the rights of man without crime and out rage. The latter asserted human freedom, yet deluged the world with blood, and buried liberty and religion beneath the ruins of the very despotism which had oppressed them.

From the one, rose the majestic form and glorious character of Washington, as the brightest living model of a citizen and a patriot.

From the other, the warlike and imperial figure of Napoleon Bonaparte, as an example of human elevation, without patriotism and virtue.

The conqueror of Europe and the captive of St. Helena, survived the Father of his Country, chained to his Promethean rock, he expired crownless and abandoned.

Washington breathed his last upon the bosom of that beloved country he had redeemed, and closing his own eyes in peace, died as he had lived, without fear and without reproach.—And although

his bones repose not beneath the gorgeous Temple of the Invalids, and were borne with no imperial ceremonies to the tomb, yet they are canonized by a nation's veneration, and have a monument more enduring than the everlasting hills—*that monument* is the Constitution of the United States, upon which I have to-day endeavored to turn your admiring eyes.—Yes, gentlemen, while human hearts palpitate, and the tongues of freemen can utter it, the name of your Washington will rally every true American citizen to its defence and support.

Partizan flattery has, in our day, tendered the homage due alone to the Father of his Country, to others upon whom their zeal would place the titles of Washington—but no, no; against this sacrilege every American heart should rebel.—There is but *one Washington*, and it is to be feared, that the men of his age have passed off the stage never again to appear,

“ For take them for all in all
We ne’er shall look upon their like again.”

In the late struggle of the French people, in vain did Lamartine pray for a European Washington.—There are spirits as heroic and purposes as pure as his, but in what character of ancient or modern times is there such an absence of self, and such a boundless love of country? Perhaps at this moment, while I am addressing you, patriots on the plains of Hungary, or within the gates of St. Peter's, are performing acts of as dauntless courage, but none can live or die in establishing such a Republic as that of Washington. Study, then, I beseech you, the great lessons to be gathered from the Age of Washington.

In your classic studies, many of you remember the beautiful sentiments recorded of a heathen philosopher. The god-like Plato, as he was termed by his followers, gives in his writings a dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades, which, though in the cold translation, is as beautiful as it is true.

Socrates says to Alcibiades :

“ If you wish public measures to be right and noble, *virtue* must be given by you to the citizens.

Alcibiades replies :

How could any one deny this?

Socrates. Virtue is, therefore, that which is to be first possessed both by you and by every other person who would have direction

and care, not only for himself, and things dear to himself, but for the state, and things dear to the state.

Alcibiades. You speak truly.

Socrates. To act justly and wisely, (both you and the state,) you must act according to the will of God."

This embodies all, and more than modern philosophy has taught, without the light of Christianity, for the philosophy of Plato was unable to search out the holy mysteries of revealed religion.

Let not then, gentlemen, in your hands at least, this virtue of which Plato speaks, and Washington illustrated, be impaired or lost in the walks of private or public life.

The times in which you are called to live and act are perilous and changing. The high tone of public virtue has been lowered too often in high places.

The standard of a partizan leader is too often surrounded by selfish demagogues—this in some degree, is inseparable from a free government and a free press, where every man is a sovereign, and every scribbler thinks himself a statesman, but the remedy for it all is education and knowledge; let light shine upon the hovel of the emigrant and the trapper—send the schoolmaster abroad, erect school houses and churches; excite and encourage the popular mind after information, and unfold in the pulpit, from the rostrum, and through the press, the principles of our government. Carry the people back to the Age of Washington, and keep ever before them his example, his virtue and his wisdom. Then, indeed, will you have performed for this and future generations, a benefaction more enduring than conquests can give; and upon every hill-top, and in every valley, shall be heard the hum of busy industry, and the songs of piety and patriotism.

But I must close this brief and imperfect address, entitled if at all to your consideration, only as it is the sincere and earnest utterance of sentiments and views long entertained by one, who like you now looks back to a period when like you he was about to bid adieu to the bright days of boyhood in the groves of the academy, and enter upon the stern duties and responsibilities of manhood.

The ready instincts of every heart before me, and the bright and beaming eyes which surround me, would seem silently but eloquently to invoke for you a long future of honor, and usefulness, and happiness. Yes, gentlemen, there will be scenes encountered and sacred ties created, I may hope by most of you, in which, while your path is illuminated by the ever burning light of

that religion which has protected you here, your hearts shall feel, if they have not already felt, not the "pangs of despised love," but the generous affection and unselfish sympathy of *these* the fairer and the purer beings of our race.

Perhaps they and you will smile, and bethink you of the fable of the fox, yet should I not breathe one word of that happiness which the reverend ministers around me and the church has consecrated as a sacrament.

"For happy, they the happiest of their kind,
Whom gentler stars unite, and in one fate,
Their hearts, their fortunes, and their beings blend."

Cherish then these flowers which shall bloom over the rugged pathway of life.

Above all recollect that there is a Providence

Which shapes our ends,
Rough hew them as we may.

And that the holy religion under whose wings you have been fostered here, is the only blessing after all, which can assuage anger, moderate ambition, sanctify love, and raising the mind from objects of temporary interest, place it upon those of eternal hope.

WERT-BOOKBINDING

JAN 1989

Grantville, PA

